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Chairman: Mr. Ashe ..... (Antigua and Barbuda)
Acting Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. Saha

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 124: Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2006-2007 (*continued*)

Strengthened and unified security management system for the United Nations (*continued*) (A/60/7/Add.9, A/60/291 and Add.1, A/60/317 and Corr.1 and A/60/424)

1. **Mr. Elnaggar** (Egypt), indicating that he was making his observations in English so that they would be accurately reflected, said that his delegation was fully committed to enhancing the security of the Organization and its staff. Recalling that the Department of Safety and Security had been established to unify the security management system and address the deficiencies described in the report drawn up by a panel headed by former Finnish President Martti Ahtisaari in the wake of the heinous attack on the United Nations compound in Baghdad in August 2003, his delegation urged the Secretariat to focus on establishing clear lines of authority, responsibility and accountability for security.

2. Echoing the concerns voiced by the representative of Jamaica on behalf of the Group of 77 and China at the Committee's 23rd meeting, and by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) in its report on the matter (A/60/7/Add.9), especially regarding the failure of the report of the Secretary-General (A/60/424) to respond fully to the request contained in section XI, paragraph 57, of General Assembly resolution 59/276, he indicated his delegation's concern at the Secretariat's tendency to establish new structures and furnish them with substantial resources without providing for detailed follow-up of the implementation of General Assembly mandates. Moreover, section XI, paragraphs 17 and 20, nad not been faithfully reflected in practice: of the 21 senior posts in the Department of Safety and Security, only two had been filled by staff members from developing countries, and the same imbalance had occurred with posts filled on a temporary basis. The Fifth Committee should be provided with data on the geographical distribution of all Department of Safety and Security posts, in keeping with the spirit of accountability and the arrangements for delegation of authority to which the General Assembly had agreed in the relevant resolutions on human resources management.

3. His delegation had listened to the Secretariat's response, at the Committee's 25th meeting, to the questions of the Group of 77 and China regarding enhanced security and access control at United Nations Headquarters. He wondered which specific provision of General Assembly resolution 56/286 on strengthening the security and safety of United Nations premises had given the Secretariat a mandate for the turnstile project, what resources would be required for the issuance of new grounds passes and which section of the budget those resources would be drawn from. He also asked why the mandate for a change in grounds passes, provided by the General Assembly in its resolution 56/286, had taken two years to implement and noted that, in section XI, paragraph 44, of its resolution 59/276, the General Assembly had deferred its consideration of the issuance of new passes pending the receipt of a detailed report from the Secretary-General.

4. The Egyptian delegation also wondered about a number of apparent contradictions in the handling of access control plans. It recalled that the Secretary-General, in paragraph 2 of his report on standardized access control (A/59/776), had announced the intention to establish a "project access control team"; that the General Assembly, in section I of its resolution 59/294, had both taken note of that intention and endorsed the recommendations and observations in the related Advisory Committee report (A/59/785); and that, as indicated in paragraph 33 of the Secretary-General's current report on a strengthened and unified security management system (A/60/424), the team had actually been set up. The team was to review and coordinate the implementation of a standardized access control system in close consultation with the Office of Central Support Services, but Egypt wondered how the Secretariat interpreted "implementation", as the General Assembly had not yet approved the access control project, and what role it intended to give the Office of Central Support Services.

5. As the response provided at the Committee's preceding meeting by the Under-Secretary-General for Safety and Security had shown that Headquarters and other duty stations were being treated unequally with regard to access control, Egypt would like more information. It was also anxious to find out more about the practical and protocol-related aspects of the turnstile plans, wondering whether only certain categories of people would be admitted via the

turnstiles, or whether Member States' Heads of State or Government, ministers and Permanent Representatives would also be expected to use them, especially while the general debate at the beginning of the General Assembly session was in progress. It also wished to know whether consideration had been given to the potential cost savings of needing fewer security guards and to the need to accommodate emergency evacuations. Furthermore, it would like a clearer indication of the individual responsibilities of the Department of Safety and Security and the Department of Management in the plans to enhance safety and security at Headquarters. The delegation of Egypt hoped that its own and other delegations' questions on safety and security would be answered in writing so that they could seek instructions from their capitals as appropriate.

6. **Mr. Veness** (Under-Secretary-General for Safety and Security) said that well-designed threat and risk assessment was essential to the development of effective security measures. In view of the potential sensitivity of that process, he reiterated his appreciation for the Committee's guidance. Since the primary responsibility for ensuring the safety and security of United Nations staff and premises lay with host countries, risk assessments should be carried out by field offices on the basis of information provided by host Governments. In accordance with section XI, paragraph 35, of General Assembly resolution 59/276, the reliability and validity of information received from sources other than international organizations and Governments must be carefully weighed. The Department's overall aim was to produce objective threat and risk assessments that provided actionable guidance to the field while respecting confidentiality and maintaining the Organization's independence.

7. Within the framework of the threat and risk assessment process, Headquarters was responsible for maintaining quality in consultation with regional desks and other Secretariat departments, ensuring that threat and risk assessments and security phases were reviewed and updated and addressing any thematic assessment needs. The continuous evaluation of incident and accident trends was a valuable tool for analysing the consistency and adequacy of risk assessments and related measures and would also facilitate the anticipation of new threats.

8. The Department of Safety and Security was focusing on developing effective partnerships with host country law enforcement and security officials. The first step in that process was the appointment of designated officials and security management teams, and efforts were under way to address gaps in that area. Second, it was vital to reach a common understanding as to the Organization's vulnerabilities and the threats it faced. Both the United Nations and host Governments must work harder to ensure that the necessary dialogue took place on a regular basis. Once the relevant threats were acknowledged and defined, focal points for coordination, information exchange and emergency response must be identified within the host country's security and law enforcement authorities.

9. Specific security measures tailored to particular locations and/or threats should then be developed and implemented. At that point, an exchange of letters should take place between the United Nations and the relevant host Government to clarify and confirm the arrangements. Ideally, the process culminated with the signature of a memorandum of understanding or the amendment of existing host country agreements to reflect the new arrangements, followed in some cases by accession to the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel, but those legal steps should be viewed as affirming rather than enabling measures.

10. Turning to physical security measures at main headquarters locations, he said that the term "physical security" encompassed all construction, fixtures, equipment and procedures that were designed to prevent unwanted access to United Nations premises and to ensure the safety and security, in both routine and emergency situations, of persons authorized to be on the premises. Unfulfilled physical security requirements at all seven main offices away from Headquarters had been grouped together into the so-called "access control" project. The Secretary-General, in his report on standardized access control (A/59/776), had proposed the establishment of a project management structure called the "project access control team", with the aim of planning and, in the event of approval by the General Assembly, coordinating the implementation of a comprehensive, fully integrated and standardized access control system, in close consultation with the Office of Central Support Services. It had been suggested that the team should start its work by reviewing existing studies and the external validation report and should then

undertake a detailed preliminary design and cost analysis.

11. In that connection, the relevant consultant had completed his site visits at the end of October 2005 and two sets of findings and recommendations were being prepared. The first set would contain guidance in respect of approved projects currently being implemented, whereas the second set, which would form an integral part of the comprehensive implementation report to be submitted at the resumed session, would focus on additional physical security requirements that had not already been addressed and approved by the General Assembly. In that connection, the term "standardization" would be taken to mean "fitness for purpose". Construction, equipment, organizations and procedures for physical security must address specific threats at particular locations.

12. With regard to staffing issues, he said that 79.9 per cent of the Department's 1,775 posts worldwide had been filled. It was expected that the remaining posts would be filled by the end of June 2006. In New York, 82.7 per cent of all posts had been filled. Vacancy announcements for 56 of the 83 vacant posts were currently on Galaxy and the remaining announcements were being prepared. The selection process should be completed within a few months. Since the post of Deputy to the Under-Secretary-General had only just been filled, he would prefer to defer commenting on it until the sixty-first session.

13. Almost 90 per cent of the safety and security posts worldwide had been filled. Although the recruitment processes in Geneva and Santiago had been delayed, all vacancies at those duty stations should be filled by the end of January and the end of April 2006, respectively. Chiefs of security at all duty stations had been able to proceed with the most recent recruitment exercise without compromising the complex work that was still outstanding on issues of key importance to career management, such as mobility and superannuation.

14. In the field, 70.8 per cent of posts had been filled. The selection process for the P-5 Chief Security Adviser posts had been completed and a roster of 262 candidates for P-3 and P-4 posts had been established. The Department was making every effort to select candidates from more diverse geographical backgrounds. An updated version of the information contained in the annex to the ACABQ report (A/60/7/Add.9) had been circulated.

15. In order to integrate security management into field operations, heads of mission from the Department of Peacekeeping Operations or the Department of Political Affairs had been appointed as designated officials in 12 countries, as well as in Kosovo and Western Sahara. Joint teams of Department of Safety and Security and Department of Peacekeeping Operations staff had visited Haiti, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Côte d'Ivoire to initiate implementation of integrated security structures, and visits to other peacekeeping missions were envisaged. In response to suggestions from Member States, the Department of Safety and Security would brief the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations and troop-contributing countries on general and mission-specific security coordination measures.

16. The security management accountability framework had been discussed in detail at the annual meeting of the Inter-Agency Security Management Network. Since a number of technical agencies had expressed the need for alternative wording, the Office of Legal Affairs was working to devise mutually acceptable language. The Department was keen to ensure the early adoption of the framework. The issue of discipline had also been discussed at the Network's meeting, and it had been recalled that disciplinary measures were provided for in the staff regulations and rules of the relevant United Nations organizations. In that connection, the newly established Compliance, Evaluation and Monitoring Unit would support and examine disciplinary action by providing an independent, consistent and well-documented incident-reporting service. Lastly, he assured Member States that he would look into the question of access to conference facilities at Addis Ababa.

17. **Ms. Taylor Roberts** (Jamaica), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, requested that the response just given by the Under-Secretary-General for Safety and Security should be provided to the Committee in writing.

18. The Group realized that the Department of Safety and Security had been obliged to recruit staff speedily under the temporary arrangements referred to in the report of the Secretary-General (A/60/424), but wondered whether those arrangements had been in the hands of the Office of Human Resources Management

and whether candidates had been taken from a roster or whether some other method had been used. The Group also wondered why the Under-Secretary-General had said he would defer commenting on his Deputy's post until the sixty-first session of the General Assembly, when the report of the Secretary-General had indicated that a review of that post would be carried out at the end of the current biennium; in other words, at the end of 2005.

19. **Mr. Veness** (Under-Secretary-General for Safety and Security) said that the response he had just given, together with his answers to the questions raised at the current meeting, would be provided to the Committee members in writing.

20. The need to fulfil pressing tasks had forced the Department to rely on temporary personnel. That genuinely temporary arrangement, which was drawing to a close, had been implemented in consultation with the Office of Human Resources Management. Temporary personnel had been selected primarily according to whether they were immediately available and possessed suitable skills, and most of them had been drawn from the United States labour market. The recruitment of longer-term staff would be more geographically representative.

21. While he would be pleased to review the post of Deputy Under-Secretary-General and to report thereon to the General Assembly, the review would be more meaningful once all of the three D-2 posts established in the Department had been filled. His Deputy had been appointed only one month previously, and the other two D-2 staff, who would cover regional operations and worldwide safety and security services, had not yet been selected. However, he would make an interim report if the General Assembly so wished.

22. **Ms. Taylor Roberts** (Jamaica), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that she was not asking for an immediate report or an interim report, but had merely been curious about the timing of the review of the Deputy Under-Secretary-General post.

23. Since revising and updating host country agreements would take several years, she wondered what the plans of the Department of Safety and Security were in that regard.

24. **Mr. Veness** (Under-Secretary-General for Safety and Security) said that the practical benefits of close cooperation with host country authorities on security-related matters did not depend solely on the existence of a formal agreement, since such agreements merely served to reaffirm existing arrangements. Since the revision of host country agreements would take years, it might be more realistic, in the meantime, to concentrate on exchanges of letters as a way of updating security arrangements.

25. **Mr. Mazumdar** (India) recalled that, in section XI, paragraph 26, of its resolution 59/276, the General Assembly had decided to create 383 new safety and security officer posts, of which 249 would be established posts and 134 would be temporary. Pursuant to the following paragraph of the same resolution, those posts would be reviewed in the light of a comprehensive report that would be submitted to the General Assembly at its sixtieth session and would address all elements contributing to the security planning of the Organization, including, in particular, the updating and revision of host country agreements. Unfortunately, in the absence of such a report, the General Assembly's review of the posts in question would not produce the desired results.

26. **Mr. Elnaggar** (Egypt) drew attention to the relationship between paragraphs 26 and 27 of section XI of resolution 59/276 and stressed that many Member States had agreed to the creation of the new posts detailed in paragraph 26 on the understanding that the review described in paragraph 27 would be carried out. However, that exercise was designed to determine the impact of host country agreements and host country security services provided to the Organization on the level of financial and human resources to be requested for the Department of Safety and Security. The intention was not to carry out a complete review of all existing agreements.

The meeting rose at 3.55 p.m.